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IPSWICH WORKING MEN'S COLLEGE.

(From the *Suffolk Chronicle*, September 29th, 1866.)

The annual meeting of the members of the Ipswich Working Men's College was held on Tuesday evening, at the Lecture Hall, Tower-street, when the certificates awarded at the examination held under the auspices of the Society of Arts in April last, were distributed to the successful candidates. There was a large attendance of members and also of ladies and gentlemen of the town. The chair was taken by the President of the Institution, the Lord Chief Baron of the Exchequer, Sir Fitzroy Kelly, and among the gentlemen on the platform were—Dr. E. Christian, the principal of the College; Mr. J. A. Ransome, Mr. S. H. Cowell, Mr. R. C. Ransome, Mr. H. Footman, Mr. G. G. Sampson, Dr. W. A. Elliston, Mr. R. J. Ransome, Mr. R. Pearce, Mr. E. Barrett (secretary to the College).

The LORD CHIEF BARON, who was received with cheers, said: Ladies and gentlemen, I assure you I am extremely happy to meet you once again in this place and upon this occasion. I certainly had entertained some doubts whether, from a change which all of you know has taken place in my condition in life since we last assembled together, I could with propriety, even if it were altogether practicable, continue to fill the office which I accepted with so much pleasure, and which I have held with such continued and increasing gratification, of the President of this Association. [Cheers.] Undoubtedly that change has broken many a tie which bound me in a very strict and cordial union with many classes and bodies of persons in this town and county, but after well considering the subject I must say it appeared to me there was no good reason why this change should dissolve or affect my connection with this Institution, for unquestionably it has in no wise in the slightest degree lessened the feelings of deep interest with which I have always considered and desired the well-being and well-doing and the prosperity and success of this the Working Men's College of Ipswich. [Cheers.] Gentlemen, I am very happy to find that during the interval which has elapsed since the last meeting you have gone on and prospered. I find that your numbers now are upwards of a thousand, and that the contributions of your members to the classes and to the carrying on of the great business of education in this Institution have largely increased, and more than all I have to congratulate you with unfeigned pleasure that several of your members have been fortunate enough deservedly to obtain prizes from the Society of Arts in their examinations in various branches of education. Gentlemen, this convinces me that you have begun to appreciate and understand the full value and the nature as well as the great importance of the principal objects of this Association. These objects, if I may be permitted to advert to them for a moment, are twofold. In the first place you naturally desire and seek to secure to yourselves some means of relaxation and enjoyment of an evening after the close of the labours of the day; a worthy and a proper object, yet inferior, I think, in its importance to the other to which I am now about to advert—the great object of this excellent Institution, the object of spreading and diffusing education and knowledge among the working-classes in this borough. It is on the latter that, in the few words that it is now my province to address to you, I shall proceed to dwell, and perhaps to confine myself. Not that I in any degree undervalue the importance to the working man of securing to himself some relaxation, some re-

creation, some amusement, after the hard work, the toils, the troubles, the anxieties of a working man's day. All these you may well seek, all these you are fully entitled to enjoy, but yet they fall far short in importance of the other object to which I have adverted, the object, namely, of obtaining for the great body of the working-classes of this country a sufficient degree of education to fit them, and to fit them wholly and entirely for the condition which it is their destiny to occupy in society. Just consider for a moment the importance of the part which you have to perform in the great business of life in this country to which it is your destiny to belong. We are told, and I believe correctly, that the adult male population of England numbers somewhere about seven millions, and of this number the working-classes, or as they are sometimes called, the industrial classes—sometimes, indeed, by a name to which they will scarcely object, it is more comprehensive, it extends to others than those who obtain a livelihood by the sweat of their brow, but they are all comprised under the term the poorer classes—of these seven millions no less or little less than five millions consist of the working or poorer classes. [Cheers.] Consider, then, I pray of you, the great, the mighty power which it is your fortune to possess in the State. In my belief, whether you possess that transcendent power for good or for evil depends chiefly, if not entirely, upon the amount and degree of education and knowledge which you may possess. Look for a moment to the importance of education; consider what it is that it does for you. It enables you to find out, to read, to study the best books. With the assistance of those who support and aid your efforts in this institution you never can be at a loss for advice and information as to the books you have to choose and into which your researches are to be made; and when you have well considered what you have read, being thus guided and assisted, you have obtained the knowledge requisite to enable you to form a judgment for yourselves upon the great questions of the day, social and political, in which you have a personal interest. Take for example the doctrine of wages in relation to labour and capital, a subject to which I think on some former occasion I cursorily adverted in addressing you, perhaps, then, as now, on account of its having acquired a degree of importance from, I will not say recent events, but from events which are going on at the present moment; a question which all who really seek the interest and well-being of the working classes must look upon with deep attention, and one which it behoves all of you to consider, for all of you are personally and momentously interested in it, and the solution of its difficulties depends entirely upon the degree of education possessed by those who have to deal with it, and whose conduct in life must be guided by their own judgment and by their own consciences when they have done all that in them lies to make themselves masters of this momentous subject. Now at this very moment what is called a strike exists in one of the northern counties amongst the iron workers, and just see the important consequences which follow from the ignorance which prevails on this question. We learn that during the short time that strike has existed the working men engaged in it have lost, or rather have failed to earn, no less than 150,000L. Now if the true principles of political economy, which are within the reach of all whom I am addressing, were properly understood, if education were duly and plenteously diffused among the people, and especially among those classes to whom this question relates, it would have been impossible that any such calamity as this could have occurred in this country, for we have only to look to the principles which govern the whole doctrine of wages in connection

with labour and capital, to know that the interests of the employers and the employed are identical. If the employed, by means of a strike or any combination, force upon their employers an advance of wages above the amount which constitutes the fair proportion that wages bear to the price of the manufactured commodity when it is brought into the market, they inevitably deprive the employers of the profit not only to which they are entitled, but which is necessary to them in order to induce them to carry on their trade, and they disable their employers from employing them longer, and the necessary consequence follows that the trade ceases, and the labourers are thrown out of work. On the other hand the like consequence follows if the manufacturers, as no doubt is sometimes the case, unduly press on the workmen, and, in a time of temporary difficulty, endeavour to secure to themselves their accustomed profit, when the price of the commodity in the market will not enable them fairly to obtain it, by forcing on their men a reduction of wages; the consequence is that unless the manufacturer in question be in some branch of trade which is monopolized by a single firm or company, the employers drive their workmen into some other quarter to obtain that adequate remuneration for their labour which they cannot under their existing masters. They, therefore, lose the labour and are unable to carry on the trade, becoming in the end the sufferers from the unjust and unrighteous course they adopted. In some parts of the country a remedy had been attempted, and with success, for these grievances. A gentleman, now connected with this county, Mr. Crossley, was, I believe, the first who conceived the idea of converting the manufactory or colliery, or whatever commercial concern it might be, into a joint-stock Company, the masters reserving to themselves two-thirds of the capital and of the profits, and distributing the remaining third among the workmen who become shareholders. The result is that both workmen and employers have the same interest. They are equally, or nearly equally interested in the profits, and it is naturally to the interest of both to see that the rate of wages bears the due proportion, and no more than the due proportion, to the market price of the manufactured commodity, after allowing a fair and reasonable rate of profit, whilst it is, on the other hand, to the interest of the employers to see that a sufficient rate of interest is paid to the employed to enable them to get on harmoniously together. There is this further advantage—that the old subject of complaint on the part of the workmen ceases to exist, that complaint, I mean, which they make that while their employers tell them they cannot realize any profit at all without a reduction of wages, they are, in fact, making as large profits as before, whereas in one of these joint-stock undertakings the workman is a partner; he has access to the books, and he is able to look into the accounts to ascertain the exact amount of profit made, and to determine for himself what is the amount of wages to which he is fairly entitled. This is, however, but a partial remedy applicable only to a few places, and leaves the great question open, subject to all the contentions and discontents and the evils of which it has been so productive—what shall be the principle upon which the labouring man shall determine the amount of wages which he shall receive with his employer? You will see that if an institution like this shall go on as this institution has begun and has gone on from its inception to the present moment—if you all do your duty diligently and apply your minds to the undertaking before you, and acquire that degree of knowledge which I have ventured to point out to you as necessary, in order to form a judgment upon these great questions so materially affecting

your interests—if you do all that (and that you are enabled to do it you have to thank yourselves and those who, like our invaluable friend Dr. Christian—[cheers], have begun, continued, but not yet ended, I hope, their efforts to serve and assist you) there can be no doubt that even the least informed and instructed among you will soon be in a condition to deal with all questions affecting your interests and to act for yourselves, and determine upon the course which it is your duty to pursue in life. There are many other questions to which I might advert but upon which I will not dwell even for a moment; enough that I should say that now that this Institution has opened a door to you by which you have only to enter to seek and to obtain that degree of information which will enable you to discharge all the duties that devolve upon you in life. You have only to determine to act under a constantly operating urgent sense of duty, to do your best in whatever may be the path of life allotted to you, and you are sure to succeed, if not in attaining all that you desire and all that you seek, at least in possessing yourselves of enough to enable you to go on with comfort, with honour, with reputation, and with a good conscience, to the end of your lives. [Cheers.] Be not discouraged by small difficulties. They are met with, they abound in every path and pursuit of life. Be not disappointed or discontented. Above all be not envious or jealous if you see a companion, or a neighbour, or a competitor more fortunate than yourselves, who may succeed where you have failed. [Hear, hear.] Remember that perfect equality does not exist; that no two things, no two persons throughout the whole compass of nature and of creation are perfectly equal and alike. [Hear, hear.] It has pleased Providence to bestow upon each of us what each of us was destined and ordained from the beginning to possess. Let us be contented with what we have, and use it to the best of our ability in fulfilling the great purposes for which, be it small or be it great, it was bestowed. [Cheers.] If you do this you will be sure to succeed, and whether it be often or seldom that it shall be my province and my pleasure and enjoyment to appear before you—[cheers]—to say and do what little I can to encourage you, to push you onward and forward in the, perhaps, not pleasing or easy path in which it is your fate to tread, for we all have our difficulties to meet and to overcome, yet upon each occasion on which I may come among you, I shall rejoice in being able to congratulate you upon the progress that you are making in the performance of the great duties that devolve upon you; and I shall rejoice in the success which I know I shall see you attain, in the efforts you are making to improve your social condition, to make yourselves fit and worthy members of society. [Loud cheers.] I shall conclude as I began by expressing my great satisfaction at the improved and improving condition of the institution which you yourselves have had such great and real merit in forming for yourselves, and in assuring you that I have ever felt, and that I shall continue to feel, the deepest interest in your prosperity and success. [Loud and continued cheering.] The president then called on

The PRINCIPAL of the College (Dr. E. CHRISTIAN), who was received with hearty applause, and who read the report of the Council. The accounts (which had been audited by Mr. George Christopherson,) showed that the sum received was 176l. 2s., viz., balance, 7l. 18s. 9d.; donations, 5l.; subscriptions, 127l. 8s.; students' fees, 33l. 2s. 6d.; rent of room, 1l. 15s.; sale of old papers, 17l. 9s. The expenditure amounted to 167l. 4s. 10d., viz., rent, 20l.; current expenses, 59l.; teachers' fees, 33l. 2s. 6d.; secretary, 2l. 16s.; collector, 10l. 19s. 6d.; curator, 14l. 14s. 4d.; Society of Arts subscription,

2*l.* 2*s.*: library, 10*l.*; outstanding accounts, 20*l.*; showing a balance in hand of 2*l.* 17*s.* 2*d.* There was a striking increase from the revenue of members' subscriptions, chiefly owing to the large addition which had been made on the register. The number of members last year was 653, and this year the number on the books was 1,003. The usual classes had been satisfactorily carried on, and also classes for chemistry (under Dr. W. Elliston), and for animal physiology, in relation to health, (under Mr. H. G. Moore.) The following certificates had been awarded by the Society of Arts:—Frederick J. Blasby, one for excellence in arithmetic, and another for proficiency in book-keeping; Albert H. Dunningham, H. W. Fisk, John H. Grimwade, Alexander G. Jeffrys, and Samuel Swales, each for competency in book-keeping; J. S. Orris, competency in geography, and one for excellence in book-keeping; W. P. Roberts, proficiency in horticulture, and for excellence in fruit and vegetable culture; Francis C. Ward for competency in arithmetic and book-keeping. In addition to these, four local certificates had been granted for elementary qualifications. Mr. P. Roberts obtained the first prize of 5*l.*, as a mark of special distinction in the branch for which he received a certificate. The Friday evenings during the session were devoted to lectures, readings, recitations, and music. The thanks of the College were due to Professor Cowell, Mr. W. B. Byng, Mr. J. F. Alexander, Mr. C. F. Gower, Mr. W. G. Moore, Dr. W. A. Elliston, Mr. Cobb, and Mr. R. Pearce, for lectures; to Messrs. Mills, Grayston, Gill, Christopherson, and others, for readings and recitations; and to Messrs. Steele, Abbott, Ashplant, Tricker, and the "Young Gentlemen of Ipswich," the College choir and the College band for musical services. Amongst the gentlemen mentioned as having presented the College with books was Mr. J. A. Ransome, who presented the "Encyclopedia Britannica," in 42 vols. A cricket club had been formed; steps had been taken for opening a gymnasium; many pleasant social gatherings of the members and friends had taken place; an open air concert had been held in the Lower Arboretum in July, attended by about 2,000 persons; and in August between 300 and 400 of their friends enjoyed an excursion to Lowestoft. In conclusion, the report congratulated all interested in promoting the welfare of the working-classes, on the great prosperity of the institution. Regret was expressed at the loss of two of the vice-presidents, Mr. Richard Garrett, and Mr. Jeremiah Head, and the Council most particularly thanked "the President of the College for the interest he has evinced in its progress, not merely by lending his name, but by aiding its efforts on every occasion, and countenancing it by his presence when required, for the willingness with which he has continued to be connected with the College after his elevation to a high and important post, and for the readiness with which he accepted the invitation to take the chair at the meeting this evening."

Mr. S. H. COWELL in moving the adoption of the report, expressed his pleasure in finding that the Lord Chief Baron had consented to continue President of the College, and to take the chair on the present occasion, for he esteemed it no slight honour that their annual meeting was presided over by one holding so high a position. [Cheers.] They must all have experienced great gratification in hearing the excellent and interesting report Dr. Christian had just read, and he congratulated them on the very encouraging character of that report. [Cheers.] He did not think there was another town in the kingdom of the same population as Ipswich which could boast of an institution so useful and successful as this, and as an Ipswich man he felt it an honour and a

credit to the town that it should contain a Working Men's College, numbering upwards of a thousand members on its books. [Cheers.] He regarded as of great importance this College, whose mission it was to improve the tastes and the habits of the working classes. He had heard that there was a probability of a debating society being formed among the members of the College, and he cordially approved of the suggestion, but in order that it might be completely successful, recommended the adoption of a rule for the exclusion of all religious and political subjects of debate. He referred to a former debating society, to which in earlier life he belonged, and which numbered among its members the present Mr. Justice Byles, and a brother of Mr. Charles Austin, the High Steward of the borough, and bore testimony to the benefit that society was to those who belonged to it. He regretted the absence of the Mayor, who, he was sure would have cordially undertaken the duty he now performed in moving the adoption of the report.

Mr. R. C. RANSOME, in seconding the report, observed that it differed somewhat from reports which they were in the habit of hearing read at some public meetings; there was no effort to make things pleasant, or to cook up a bad balance sheet, and make out a dividend when none existed. All they had heard was solid and substantial; to that which was worthy of praise, praise was given, and where there had been failure no attempt was made to gloss it over. [Cheers.] It was very satisfactory to learn that they had added 40 per cent. to their number during the past year, and he trusted they would go on progressing, if not in an equal ratio, and that could not hardly be expected, at least in such a manner as would be encouraging to themselves and those who interested themselves in the College. [Cheers.]

The motion was carried unanimously.

The PRESIDENT said it was now his pleasing duty to call on the successful candidates to come forward and receive the prizes which had been awarded to them by the Society of Arts, to which they were so well entitled. He had hoped that the duty would have fallen on one of the vice-presidents, to whom it would have been a matter of the highest gratification. Several of their vice-presidents had lost since the last meeting. They had to mourn the loss of Mr. Jeremiah Head, whose name he had only to mention to ensure the respectful regret and sorrow of all. They had also lost a most estimable friend of his own—the late Mr. Richard Garrett, and since he last had the honour of addressing them they had had to lament the loss of Mr. Robert Ransome, who died most unexpectedly, too soon for the interests, the hopes, and the wishes of all who knew him, and were connected with the interests of this town. Happily there yet survived some of his name, who worthily represented him, and two or three of whom were present with them.

The successful candidates whose names appear in the report were then called to the platform, and the president, with a few appropriate words of encouragement and praise to each, presented the certificates.

Mr. G. G. SAMPSON referred to the "Young Men's Working Association," which was formed 20 years ago, with nearly similar objects to those of the Working Men's College, and of which Mr. J. A. Ransome was the first president, an office he (Mr. Sampson) afterwards occupied. That Association eventually became amalgamated with the Mechanics' Institution. He spoke in terms of warm praise of the College, and said the young men who were students at it had a glorious opportunity to drink deep of the well-springs of knowledge, and of sources of the highest enjoyment and improvement of various kinds—they had food fit for the gods. [Cheers.]

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He reminded them that these means of improvement were not entrusted to them with any sordid or mercenary intentions; they were not to hide them as the miser hid his treasure; they were given for the purposes of bringing forth good and precious fruits. It was impossible for him to find words to express what he felt with regard to the gentleman to whom he was about to propose a vote of thanks; without him it would be nothing, with him it was pretty well everything—he meant Dr. Christian. [Loud cheers.] His were the hands that worked the machinery of the College, and it was through and by him that the Institution was in so satisfactory a position. [Cheers.]

Mr. HENRY FOOTMAN seconded the motion. He believed there were few men in Ipswich who enjoyed popular favour so deservedly as Dr. Christian. [Cheers.] It was no slight piece of good fortune for Ipswich, no slight advantage to the cause of popular education, that such a man as Dr. Christian should have thrown his whole soul as he had done into a movement of this description. [Cheers.] He believed at the commencement of this College prophecies were made about the almost certain failure of this college, which had been most thoroughly falsified, and on the other hand, a great many of the hopes which some of its most sanguine supporters had entertained had been more than realised. At the same time, he should be far from doing justice to his own feelings and the feelings of the council, if he allowed this occasion to pass by without distinctly asserting that they were none of them prepared to admit that they had, at present, reached the goal upon which their eyes were fixed from the outset. There were still many important steps to be taken. There was still a feeling to be raised amongst the working classes of Ipswich, which did not at present exist, in favour of the college. If that feeling did exist in the strength he believed it would one day, instead of meeting in the hall of another institution they would meet in their own, and their numbers would be such that that hall would not hold them. [Cheers.] It was one of the greatest mistakes ever made by the working classes when they forgot or ignored the fact that it was upon their possession of knowledge and their attainment of intellectual superiority that the whole of their political well-being depended. [Cheers.] The enormous power that was latent in them must remain latent, or, if brought out, be injurious to them, unless they grasped the truth; and only by becoming men with their eyes open to the grand facts around them, to the history of the past and to the science of the present, could they ever hope to render themselves the real stuff of England, the true basis of her prosperity and welfare. [Cheers.] That was the fundamental principle which had induced him to do his little towards helping on this great institution. He then referred to the proposed debating society, and while he believed all questions of religious partisanship and theological difference should be rigidly excluded, he did not see how it was possible, if they were to discuss history, philosophy, even local questions, to exclude allusion to the passing political events of the day. [Cheers.] There was no occasion to quarrel because they did not belong to a certain party. Whether political discussions should be allowed, however, was a question which must be left to the more philosophical mind of Dr. Christian to decide. [Cheers and laughter.] He would willingly see their numbers reduced one-half if every one of the members belonged to the working classes. It was of the greatest importance that they should have subscriptions, but of much more importance that they should have human souls of the class for whom the college was intended; not merely young men but middle-aged men, not merely

boys, but persons who although in the decline of life, felt it was important for them to grasp the fruit hanging on the tree of knowledge. The members of the College were proud that it had fallen to their lot to give the first public welcome to a man who had recently obtained a position for which it was the unanimous opinion of educated society that he was most peculiarly fitted. [Cheers.] Mr. Footman concluded by alluding to the delicacy which induced Sir F. Kelly to decline the public congratulation which was offered him on his appointment.

Dr. CHRISTIAN responded, and alluded to the attempt at a work similar to that now executed by the College, in which he joined Mr. J. A. Ransome, Mr. Sampson, and others, expressing his belief that at that time the working classes were not ripe for it. This College had succeeded beyond anything he could expect. [Cheers.] Mr. Footman was perfectly right that if they were to succeed it was not merely large numbers of subscribers that they wanted. More was done for the education of the lowest classes of society than for those lying between them and the middle classes—artizans, clerks, and assistants—and he asked why should not they begin with those who were fit for it, and wished it? Why should they not give opportunities of enjoying themselves in the most harmless and most educational way to such as those whom they brought together at the social meetings of the Working Men's College? He spoke of the excellent conduct of those who had taken part in any of the *fêtes*, excursions, &c., and alluded to the constitution of the College, which was very much like the constitution of England—every one knew they had a constitution, but what that constitution really was no one knew. [Cheers and laughter.] There were no set rules, and a member scarcely knew what he was to do and what to leave undone, but they generally did what was right and left undone what was wrong. [Cheers.]

Mr. J. A. RANSOME, who was received with much cheering, proposed a vote of thanks to the Council of the College. One great feature in the institution which gave him sanguine hope for its long continuance was the fact that it was in the main self-supporting, and still more the fact of its members being the parties by whom its arrangements were made. [Cheers.] He spoke in high praise of the recreation afforded by means of the College to its members, especially of the social gatherings.

Mr. R. PEARCE responded for the Council, and took the opportunity of explaining the nature of the examinations of the Society of Arts, giving some instances of the kind and amount of knowledge required of the candidates, showing the severity of the tests which were applied.

Dr. CHRISTIAN moved a vote of thanks to the Committee of the Mechanics' Institution for the use of the Lecture Hall, which was cordially acquiesced in.

A vote of thanks to the president was then carried by acclamation, and in responding, Sir F. Kelly again expressed the interest he felt in the College, which was an honour to the borough, and an example to the working men throughout the British Isles, which he trusted they would not be slow to follow. With reference to the proposed debating club, and whether or no political discussions should be excluded, he recommended that a general meeting of the members and supporters of the College should be held to consider the matter, and while highly commanding debating societies, he warned them that the admission of political subjects might tend to give rise to differences, which might threaten the peace, if not the very existence, of the Institution.

The meeting then broke up.

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